

**An Archaeological Research
of Alchemy in Prague and Bohemia
in the XVI and XVII centuries
during the Reign of Rudolf II**

Last Material

(Reviewed and extended – Buenos Aires – August 2013)

Translation from original in Spanish

Introduction

Some explanations regarding the scope of the study

Our research is based on Silo's suggestions and comments referred to the Material Discipline, contained in the following writings: *"Extracts from Acts of School (2006-2010) and the Complete School Notes"*.

"Alchemy in the West. It would be interesting to trace the manifestations (remains) of Alchemy in Occident and the Middle Ages in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seeing what substances, procedures, equipment, laboratories, people, etc., appeared first (Prague). "We have "testimonies" of persons who saw God while they were mixing "substances", similar to what the monks did in the churches."

*"**Dream and trance.** The idea to make a being bit by bit, is very medieval (Rabbi Jehuda Löw ben Bezalel in Prague with the Golem already manifests this tendency that is perhaps older). From Prague will emerge the idea, place of the puppets, of the dolls, where life is managed by the invisible threads (Kafka in *The Castle*, in *The Process*, where everything is out of control, and where he has been processed without knowing of what he is accused, shows this expression in a clear and intense way). The Golem, a figure made of mud that starts to walk, no wonder that he appears there. The rabbi says a few words that give him life and he begins as an assistant but then he acts with his own script. The "homunculus" they could give birth in a boiling flask, takes shape in Prague, is the "androgynous" and then the "homunculus", a objective of the alchemists".*

"The glassmakers, alchemists, the golem, are in this place, despite being so small has a high density. They appear the brachycephalics, the effects "Luxemburg", is a geographical line that passes through there, from Luxembourg (Charles IV from Luxembourg - Emperor of the German Empire) to Romania, with the "Draculescos", producing a fault line that passes through Prague".

"There is a cultural fracture line, between East and West, ending in Albania and passing through Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Southern Austria, and Luxembourg. In this place is generated a clash of forms, this mix of styles, produces a location in another space. The culture shock between the Roman Empire and Germania, between the Franks and the Austro-Hungarians, leads to the location in another space."

In these paragraphs have we based our field research, those data were subsequently corroborated and we could verify that indeed there are concrete "traces" of Alchemy of that time, even some newly discovered, confirming the magnitude and importance that the "Golden Age" had.

Prague remains as a city steeped in its allegorical and artistic world, the Black Theatre and puppets are part of its idiosyncrasy.

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*Learn to recognize the signs of the sacred within you and around you.
From the book "Silo's Message", "The Path"*

An Archaeological Investigation of Alchemy **Prague, a city wrapped in darkness**

*When humanity loses the sense of the sacred,
a mist covers its existence, until a new dawn arrives.*

Many times the events that took place become myths, and these in turn are transforming the reality of peoples. This is what happens in Prague today, mythical city that was losing, over the centuries, what once became the search for life's meaning. When in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an emperor, Rudolph II, was able to transform the city in the academic, cultural and mystical Western Center, probably many people was involved in that open spirit, necessary to release the talent of human beings. This made it possible that the greatest sages, alchemists, astrologers, astronomers and artists could converge, among others, and they transformed the narrow view of the medieval world. It was the deep purpose of an Emperor, he glimpsed the possibility of spiritual development, which enabled the practice of alchemy as a means to achieve this and to transmit it to other human expressions. In the historical moments when some people might reach enlightenment through the Discipline, the humanity went forward due to their great discoveries, which were then developed over the centuries. But as there is a saying: "where there was fire, ashes remain", it can be applied literally to Prague, since there are still undeniable "traces" that confirm the presence of the alchemists, and that they are unearthed new underground laboratories, in which they have undoubtedly being working with the sacred fire.

"The period of Rudolph II's reign, but also the time before he ascended the throne, and also after his reign, was largely based in favor of occult sciences such as alchemy, astrology and magic. The Egyptian tradition was understood during this period of time as the key to understanding the hidden forces of the world, and therefore also the key to their control, and a solution that could transform the unbalanced world full of strife into a world full of harmony, as the mythical golden Age described by Ovid in his Metamorphoses. Perhaps that could be the reason why Giuseppe Arcimboldo portrayed Rudolph II as Vertumna, the Roman god of all seasons"¹

The Middle Ages was a period where religion prevailed, both as repression, in the case of the Inquisition, or as a promoter of deep feelings that allowed the proliferation of alchemy labs across Europe. Alchemists were the possessors of deep spirituality, of the belief in immortality and the sacred, they had to hide themselves from those who took over a fanatical faith, violent and destructive, which were erected in judges of truth, condemning "heretics" who were trying to penetrate the secrets of nature, which would be forbidden to mortal humans.

¹ Rudolph II and his Prague, Bohumil Vurm – Magazine: Alchemists and magicians of old Prague, 2012

For this reason, even in recent times are alchemy labs unexpectedly found in basements, where they were hidden, as in the case of the "Workshop Prague Alchemist"² and "Alchemistenmuseum" in Austria, laboratory equipped with objects found in the castle of Oberstockstall.³ This is a clear evidence that they worked with objects of ceramics, glass, metals, using furnaces and crucibles for high temperatures. The visited laboratories were equipped to work on alchemy, metals (metallurgy) and plants (herbal medicine). Some of them also had libraries, and a special room dedicated to praying.

The magic surrounding the Alchemy seems to refer to both the predictions and the art of healing, as they were the alchemists who prepared medicinal plants by distillation, and people came to them when they got sick. In alchemy museums are hanging dried plants and in some ones there are special areas to dry them and for their preparation. There are various forms of distillers which were also used for this purpose. Also in some cases there were embalmed animals, which had been used for testing.

We may infer from their alchemical works, which included mystical practices of prayer, and for their studies in such diverse areas, that they would have achieved profound internal transformations, which are evident in the manufacture mastery of glass, metals and ceramics objects, which did not merely fulfilled an aesthetic function, but they were used by themselves in all their experimentation. Unfortunately his various writings are not available, either because they were not published, they were destroyed or they are in private libraries only accessible to specialists.

*"Christianity condemned magic considering as an ineffective and absurd idea that a human soul may be subjected to "supernatural" and invisible forces. At the same time an idea prevailed in the medieval Christianity that magic was based on superstition. However, in the popular European imagination has developed a colorful mythology of the witch covens and the synergy with devils. In the 15th century this doctrine was accepted by the church, and encouraged witch-hunt, burnings and tortures. In the Czech lands such processes finished in 1756. Presently the Church humbly apologizes for this dark chapter of its history."*⁴

² Located on the street Hástalska, Prague 1

³ XVI century underground lab discovered in 1980, behind the chapel of Oberstockstall in Kirchberg am Wagram, Austria.

⁴ Article *"Magic and Alchemy reflected in the Eyes of Christians, Jews and Muslims"*, Prof. PH Dr. Lubos Kropáček, CSx.

*Today, it cannot be denied that lead can be transmuted into gold.
And those who pursued our alchemists,
grumble now in front of the cyclotrons of physics,
although they are obliged to concede them.
From the book: "The Messiah in check" – H. Van Doren - 1970*

Alchemy in Prague and Bohemia in the XVI and XVII centuries

During the historical period in question, there was a great interest in Alchemy, fervently practiced by many people, this work transcending the walls of the "hidden" laboratories, spread throughout the city of Prague, Bohemia, and near its borders. Its manifestations were reflected in all kinds of objects and figures, in the everyday life of people and in the History itself, which makes undeniable its existence, the magnitude of its importance and the enormous influence it has had on those who were involved in that space and that historical time. Both bourgeois and nobles practiced this discipline in the underground laboratories of their mansions and castles. According to Czech historian Josef Svátek⁵, there were Alchemy labs in the Castles *Hasistejn of Andělská Hora, Třebová Moravská of Třeboň*, in *Český Krumlov* and in many others. And also emperors, labored and even protected as patrons to alchemists who arrived from all over Europe, who demonstrated enough qualities to try metallic transmutations or display worthwhile experiments, after being carefully examined and approved by a senior member of the court.

And here we will highlight the figure of the Emperor Rudolph II of Habsburg, who moved in the Spring of 1583 the imperial court from Vienna to Prague, leaving government affairs in the hands of his ministers, while he fully devoted himself to science and art and in his own Prague-Hradcany Castle's laboratory, to his passionate interest: the alchemy, not for the purpose of achieving greater wealth, but to understand the nature and divine wisdom through this discipline.

The enabling environment: (Rudolph II reigned from 1576-1611) Prague was the main city of the region of Bohemia, a central point in Europe, a meeting place between various ethnic groups and civilizations. According to legend, the mythical Princess Libuse (VIII century) prophesied: "Y had a dream. I have seen a great city whose fame and glory will touch the stars". In that place was founded Prague (Prah means threshold). Many of the buildings that today are sacred to Christian culture, were erected on sacred buildings of the pagan culture.

Although Rudolph II was raised in the Catholic Court of his uncle, King Philip II of Spain, he was tolerant of Protestantism and other religions, including Judaism. Personally, he did not attend in general Catholic celebrations, even at the time of his death, he refused to receive the extreme unction.

⁵ JOSEF SVÁTEK: "Kulturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen – Die Alchemie in Böhmen" - Year 1879

He supported mainly conciliarists⁶, irenicism⁷ and humanists.

The Emperor founded in his court a kind of Scientific Academy, where the main discipline was Alchemy. This institution was headed by the Emperor's personal physician, *Tadeáš Hájek of Hájek*, which was the most outstanding scientific personality of his time in the Czech Republic. According to the Jesuit historian of Bohemia *Balbinus Boleslaus*, known as *Balbin*, at the court of Emperor Rudolph II worked on about 200 alchemists. The art's chamber, that was created with famous paintings, with the most sophisticated instruments of the time and with collections of the most different objects, was systematically organized in an encyclopedic way. As usual at that time, the collection was private, but friends of the emperor, artists, scholars and professionals were allowed to study there. This collection became an invaluable research tool during the flourishing of the seventeenth century. He appointed the polyglot *Anselmus Boetius of Boodt* in charge of the collection, who wrote a catalog of the Royal Museum. One of the books bought by Rudolph II was the "*Voynich Manuscript*", which still today it is not possible to decipher the language or know who wrote it. It has many strange drawings of plants not yet known.

Rudolph II could create, with his support and tolerance for all religions and beliefs, a physical and psychological environment, capable of receiving the action of the transcendental plane, as evidenced by the discoveries and works of art that were produced at that time. Many wise men came forward to Prague, they were given the necessary facilities for the development of their researches. However, the successors of Rudolph II were, by contrast, no tolerant neither with other religions, nor with those who practiced these arts. Many alchemists were, like them, christians showing a deep spirituality and admiration for nature, but they did not agree with the Vatican methods to impose their beliefs, and having no more the Emperor's protection, their laboratories remained active, but now hidden and finally were or had to be abandoned.

Over the centuries, other interests were overshadowing the importance of that period, deforming and even concealing all reality of the events. Many people, influenced by currents of rationalism, made use of certain scientific achievements of that time, to degrade the Alchemy relegating it to the category of pre-chemistry, reaching to conclusions such as the idea of transmutation was "scientifically" impossible, but they used the elements and instruments found in old labs to continue with their own chemical experiments.

⁶ Conciliarism or conciliar theory is the doctrine that considers the Ecumenical or Universal as the supreme authority of the Church, exalting it (conditionally or in principle) over the papacy. This doctrine argues that an ecumenical council representing the whole Church and gets its power directly from Christ; they are under that authority and all the faithful must obey, also members of the hierarchy, including the Pope.

⁷ Erasmus (1466-1536) by irenicism or pacifism he declares himself against the wars, especially wars between religions.

And thus also this "golden" period was being little by little forgotten, (like a person who had a significant internal experience in the past and now remember it as it has been a dream). At present there is no throughout Prague a single monument or a plaque to commemorate the Emperor Rudolph II. Only his tomb is in the Cathedral of St. Vitus, (Katedrála Svatého Víta).

We must appreciate the dedication of works and publications of those who still maintain the interest in that period and in the Alchemy. We currently observe a distortion of the knowledge about what actually happened, in part perhaps lack of interest, but also because the thematic is largely in the hands of traders (gains are the most important), censors, (in their thoughts remains in force the papal bull issued by John XXII in 1317 by outlawing the Alchemy) and misinterpreters or deniers. They exhibit similar arguments: there were explosions due to incompetence, warning about serious potential dangers, indebtedness that inevitably leads to a permanent poverty, and lack of "verifiable results" which is equal to be considered impostor.

Finally, if we asked today to any person of Czech nationality on the street about Rudolph II, many of them would refer to a film of the 50's: *"The Emperor's Baker - The Baker's Emperor"* - *"Císařův Pekař to pekařův Císař"* historical comedy that presents a satirical, mocking look on his person, his Reign and those who surrounded him.

"Today, little or nothing remains in Prague from those beautiful times of the alchemical period of Rudolph II. The golden spheres and 350 points of small towers and bells still remain. The spiritual Golden Prague has been eroded by weather bites, whose most serious traces date back from the most recent communist and materialistic period. Most of the works of art collected by Rudolph II were taken away by the Swedes at the end of the Thirty Years War. The religious freedom advocated by Rudolph II disappeared, and it would take a long time to recover its validity. Likewise wealth and gold manufactured by the Emperor by way of Alchemy have disappeared. Also has disappeared the alchemist spirit. Would be possible for Prague to achieve again its spiritual dimensions? Would new alchemists be born, able to resurrect the disappeared spirits of the past? We hope so, because as some wise professor said: "hope is a form of faith"⁸

For this field study, a kind of archaeological investigation of the Material Discipline (Alchemy), we have visited museums, mansions and castles in several cities of the Czech Republic: *Prague (Praha)*, *Kutna Hora (Kutné Hore)*, *Budyne on the bank of River Ohre (Budyně nad Ohří)* and also *Kirchberg am Wagram in Austria*, tracking down the remains of Alchemy's manifestations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, attempting to rescue bibliographies, substances, procedures, laboratory elements, people, etc., who have had a prominent place, in order to highlight the existence and importance that Alchemy had at the time of Rudolph II, recognizing however that peak period, as a link in the chain-historical evolution of this Discipline.

⁸ SLAVICA KROČA: *"Alchemists in the Court of Rudolf II" – "Alchymisté na dvoře Rudolfa II"* - Year 2008

Brief comment concerning the study

*"For the inauguration of the Technical Museum Vienna in 1918, an Alchemy lab has been set up, taking as a model the lab from the most famous Austrian alchemist Friedrich Sehfeld, who lived in the mid-eighteenth century, which is assumed that it was still preserved in the year 1913. There were also brought historical objects throughout monarchical territory and even from abroad to "install" this laboratory. It was not an original construction, but they wanted mostly to transmit a general impression."*⁹

This last remark has been useful in our field study, as a criterion to adopt in order to discern which ones were the original laboratories and the ones that have been set up. We shall highlight the most significant, that is the original "remains" of the Discipline, leaving aside those sometimes "misguided" sets, which seek to recreate in an imaginative and fanciful way, the true dynamism that existed in ancient alchemical laboratories.

Prague – Staré Město

In *Josefov*, the old Jewish quarter, only a few old houses "survived" the great restoration, which according to the chronicles, were built in the year 900. In one of them, from which there are data from 1412, because it has been registered for tax audit, it was discovered after the great flood of 2002, an underground Alchemy lab, whose entrance was bricked up behind a wall. Currently there is the Museum: *"Alchymistická Dílna Prahy"*.

In the first room of solids and vaulted ceilings, four paintings with the form of circles on the walls immediately catch the eye, they are representing the four elements. In the figure of the fire (Ignis) can be seen yellow and red colors drawn in the form of tongues of fire. The air (Aer) is represented by a light blue background and light blue lines as volutes revolving round. The water (Aqva) with a background of a deep blue color with light strokes representing ocean waves. And lastly, the earth (Terra), covered with green shapes and fine yellow lines that resemble plants. So beautiful have been artistically designed the four elements in their shapes and colors on the walls of the Museum.



As for the colors, overlapped with what Paracelsus says about it in his *"Book of Images"*: *"the bluish color applies particularly to the earth, the green to the water, the yellow to the air, red to the fire"*.

In the alchemical work, the colors are of fundamental importance for the operator, as they indicate the moment of process in which the material is and/or its changes or modifications. Moreover, when the sages recommend *"not to rely too much on the color"*, that

⁹ MECHTHILD DUBBI: *"Die Alchemistenküche des Technischen Museums Wien"*- October 2001

means to distinguish between those permanent from circumstantial colors, to make a correct reading of the indicators that are often presented along the Work.

But the most suggestive is a painting which entails an evident allusion to Alchemy. Within a small shield on green background, two alembics or flasks with their distillatory heads, their tubes fit into each other reflecting a dynamic unit, two materials identical in nature, interacting as a moebius strip. Over there is a helmet and further up a golden crown, at both sides of it spread out red and white wings, whose colors are intermingled around the lower shield. The whole is contained in a circular larger shield in the form of laurel leaves.



Pulling back a section of a huge bookcase, we could entered down a stone stairway to a underground laboratory. It consists of three chambers with a long corridor that connects them. On the side of the first entrance, there is a bronze bas-relief 1595 year. Its text refers to an ethical judgment: *"That every senator who enter this court, to exercise his function, leave in this door all his private affections: the anger, the violence, the hatred, the friendship and the adulation, and to assume in his person the care of the State. For just as you are right or wrong to others, in the same way also you will wait and endure the judgment of God"*¹⁰ Already Zosimus of Panópolis, at the end of the third century or early in the fourth, said something similar: *"Rest the body, calm the passions, if you control yourself in this way, you will attract the divine being to yourself."*



In this large camera with low ceilings, there is still a source that provided water. It seems to have been this room the most suitable place for general tasks. Ancient laboratory objects, clay ovens, work tables and scales "decorate" this room.

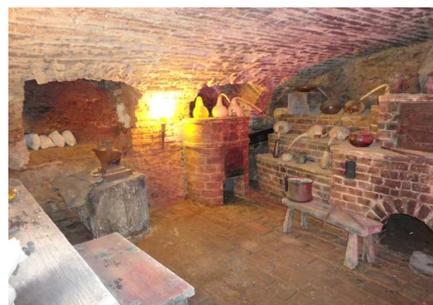
To the side and behind this camera, there are two exit or emergency tunnels, one towards the market of the old city and the other went in the direction of the castle of the Emperor.



To the right of the entrance to the second chamber there is another bronze bas-relief showing a knight mounted on a horse, which seems to have subdued a figure like a lion that assumes a submissive posture. Overhead, a winged female in the middle of two other fable beings, seems to be directly connected to the rider and light him. In the bottom of the plate, a written with dates and a text could refer to a victory over unwrought Material.

¹⁰ Translation of Latin to Spanish from Professor POZZI MARTIN. "Classical Philology Institute UBA-Puán." Buenos Aires

This second chamber, "more intimate", turned out to be perhaps more appropriate for specific works. It is not surprising that right there would have been found traces of powder gold. Here too we find ancient laboratory objects, such as ceramic retorts and glass alembics over large baked clay ovens, etc.



In the third chamber there is a large furnace with several extraction mouths of molten glass, which together with alembics, funnels and remains of glazed materials, were found when the underground laboratory was discovered. There is no doubt that they have there manufactured their own and necessary laboratory instruments through the ancient technique of glass blowing.

To the side, a smaller room was used as a reservoir of firewood, coal and for drying medicinal plants.

This well-equipped laboratory could belong to the historical period in which Rudolph II reigned. Also would be interesting to know those who have worked there. One of the initials, *MW*, recorded in one of the bas-reliefs, finally led us to the person of *Mikolaj Wolski from Podhajec of Pólkożic*, diplomat, raised in the court of the Duke of Austria and he has been serving the emperor for several years. *"Between 1607 and 1616 Sendivogius performed alchemical experiments in the home of a polish Maecenas, the chamberlain Mikolaj Wolski. The creation and sponsorship of workshops, dedicated to metalworking, that carried out together, meant an economic success."*¹¹

On the other hand, the Rabbi Löw had his place for working, studying and meditation on the old-new Synagogue of Prague *"Synagoga Staronowa w Pradze"*, near the laboratory. It would not be very misguided to assume that the same Rabbi also may have had knowledge of the existence of the underground laboratory and its practices. *Jehuda Löw ben Bezalel*, known as *Rabbi Löw or the Maharal of Prague* (1520-1609) was a rabbi in Prague between 1588 and 1592. Towards the end of his life he moved back to Prague, where he died and was buried in the Jewish cemetery of the place. He deeply studied the Talmud and Kabbalah and had excellent knowledge of Alchemy, Mathematics and Astronomy. He had keys to many secrets of nature, hidden from others, and he could work wonders, so that people were amazed at his magic power. He left a religious, philosophical and pedagogical legacy.



¹¹ KARIN Figala: *"Alchemy: Encyclopedia of Hermetic Science"* Year 1998

Several legends linked the Emperor with the Rabbi, including that he taught Kabbalah to the Emperor. A testimony of this is a table bell made of seven metals alloy based on Kabbalistic instructions and owned by Rudolph II, (now in the Museum of Art History in Vienna).

The February 16, 1592 was given to Rabbi Löw an interview with the Emperor Rudolf II in the Castle, which had been arranged by the court astronomer Tycho Brahe, with whom the Rabbi had good relations. On the basis of this historic event, is clear that the meeting was due to mutual interest that they all had for Alchemy.

The Golem Legend

Judah Löw ben Bezalel is known for the legend of the Golem, disseminated through a novel written by Gustav Meyrink in the early twentieth century, which largely overshadowed the historical and scholarly work of Rabbi. According to legend, the Golem was created from clay to which he was breathed life through a *shem* (table with Hebrew inscription) in the mouth, with the word "*emet*". When he wanted to destroy him, he removed the letter "e", the word "*met*" means death. The word Golem is also used in the Bible (Psalm 139:16) and Talmudic literature to refer to an embryonic or incomplete substance.

Prague – Malá Strana

In the exhibition at Bridge Tower entrance to Malá Strana, "*Malostranská mostecká věž*", we find a wide variety of glazed ceramic pots. The retort or distillation apparatus was obtained by melting the conical flask and a cap in only one piece, and it was used, unlike the one of glass, to withstand high temperatures. The *Aludel* consists of small glazed ceramic or glass rounded vessels, open at the top and bottom, which are placed one above the other and then



onto the vessel or sublimation flask so that each container receives a fraction of the sublimate. The *phial* is a long-necked conical flask without alembic with a narrow opening which served to heat different substances without reaching the boiling point. Another device was the circulatory system, also called "pelican", whereby, the distillate returned again to the conical flask. Many of the inlet and outlet tubes of those jars were of different thickness, shape and length, and they were designed and built so as to serve to operate in a very precise way, through distillation or sublimation processes, on certain substances or for the manufacture of acids or liquid solvents.



In some cabinets there were texts from Alchemy books in two languages, Czech and English. Here we highlight part of one of the most significant texts: "*The purity of gold ought to be gained through the projection of metals depended on the purity of operator's*

heart. The alchemists declared that mere working with substance is not enough to get the result. On the contrary, they believed that a man loses his knowledge when he loses the purity of heart. Therefore they understand their work-room as a laboratory and oratory at the same time."¹²

House of the Donkey in the Cradle - *U osla v kolénce*

The ass or donkey is a symbol or allegorical element widely used by alchemists. In mythology, the satyr *Silenus* rode an ass, as well as was a donkey the one carrying the coffer that served as *God Dionysus's* cradle. In ancient Greece, were the donkeys who led the *Eleusinian mysteries* in the great feasts dedicated to the *goddess Demeter*, and in the *Delphi Apollonian cults* they were sacrificed considering them sacred animals.

When the Englishman Edward Kelley, called Talbot, first traveled to Prague in 1584, brought with him projection's powders that had been found in the tomb of a prominent bishop in Wales and John Dee, who traveled with him, taught him how to use them. Kelley achieved in this way his first and resonant metallic transmutation before Rudolph II and members of the court, so that he was widely recognized.



The house called the "Donkey in the Cradle," "U osla v kolénce" in the Jansky street "Jánský vršek", is at present the "Alchemists and Magicians of old Prague Museum" ("Muzeum alchymistů a mágů staré Prahy"). It was Kelley's residence the last three years of his life, where he was dedicated to the creation of the Homunculus. His laboratory and study room were located on top of the old tower, which together with its spiral staircase of wooden steps remain still intact since that time.

In this Museum, there is a part intended for the homunculi exhibition. Unlike the Golem,



made of clay, here they were made with human bones and flesh, and given life with specially prepared juices (as the guide told us). They made them to have loyal assistants, who obeyed orders as the puppets. But when the homunculus grew more than the display case containing it, it became dangerous and they had to take his life. There were other smaller (there are replicas on exhibit in small glass jars), that would have been made with a mixture of

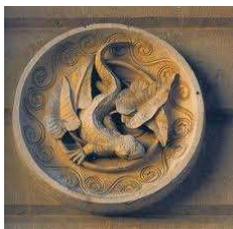


man's semen and blood. According to Paracelsus in his "Philosophia Magna":

"A homunculus is formed by subjecting the male sperm to putrefaction into a glass flask, and through feeding it with human blood would form a small being."

¹² H.J. SCHEPPARD: "European Alchemy in the Context of an Universal Definition"

The salamander. On one side of the entrance to the tower's Museum, there is a long closed box with circular glass holes on the sides. When you look through them, it can be seen inside, "caged" like a dangerous animal, a huge salamander, who is a fabulous being "that lives in fire and eats fire". *"When man talk about "wheel of fire", he refers to common gradually increased fire. When is made a reference to "our fire," is pointed out the property of warmth that contain substances that are seemingly cold and inert but in its composition they include "fire".*¹³ The salamander is one of the most representative and significant allegorical figures of alchemical iconography.



Kutná Hora - *Kutné Hoře* – Central Bohemia

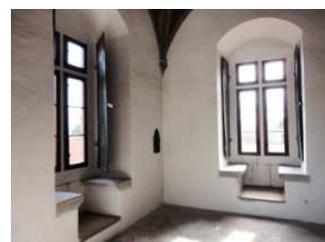
*"... around 1480, Heinrich Bodebrad or Hynek of Minterberg or Münsterberg, (z Starší Minstrberka Jindřich, Jindřich z Starší Poděbrad) had built on the same tower added Minterberg's house, a special alchemy laboratory. The house was long ago modernized, but the tower with the old alchemical workshop remained, at least inside, without any modification. In style, this place was unique, where Prince Heinrich performed his alchemical researches. Years later, is coincident with the description of Professor B. Grueber "... Along one wall is a small oven a meter 20 of height, with a single chimney seven centimeters in width, to intend on the fire's ignition. Elsewhere, was installed a small drainage channel for liquid waste. But a convincing proof that the space was built and installed for "scientific purposes", are the four iron hooks, placed in the ribs of the vault, determined to hold the instruments hanging ..."*¹⁴



Alchemy comprises two inseparable tasks, the material and the spiritual, unified under one purpose and pointing in the same direction. *"Certainly it is a material operation coupled with a spiritual operation, but hidden under the terms of vulgar chemistry. The one does not exclude the other, on the contrary, as they necessarily complementary each other."*¹⁵ These two aspects are "materialized" in the



Renaissance style house with gothic features called Sankturinovský, (*Sankurinovský dum*), located in the city center of Kutná Hora, (*Kutné Hoře*), located in the Central Bohemian region, about 80 km East of Prague. On the second floor of the Tower, which was once the laboratory from just mentioned



¹³ Silo: *"Alchemy Documents"*, Mendoza, Argentina, year 2000

¹⁴ JOSEF SVÁTEK: *"Kulturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen – Die Alchemie in Böhmen"* – Year 1879

¹⁵ LOUIS CATTIAUX: *"Thoughts of Louis Cattiaux in the margins of the books he was studying"*

Prince Hynek de Minterberg, there is a room with high vaulted ceiling, with windows on three sides of the tower and fixed seats on the sides of each of them. This cozy, quiet and concentrating space served as an "oratory" where the alchemists went sure, before and perhaps also at the end of their work, to meditate or pray, and perhaps also to exchange experiences.

And walking down to the basement by a stone winding staircase, there are left and right three well spacious cameras plus a fourth somewhat smaller where the different laboratories were installed with corresponding tools and ovens of various sizes. In one panel, a text says: *"The main idea of transmutation, is that metals are "maturing" in the bowels of the Earth from being base into noble. The task of the alchemist is to perform the same process, but in shorter times than those of nature itself."*



In the farthest chamber, down some steps, a library full of books on the subject, makes allusion to the importance that the alchemists accorded to the study. *"Several Hermetic Philosophers have contributed to the diligent seeker a method that can serve as a kind of Ariadne's thread to guide them through the dark labyrinthine alchemical literature: choose the best books, read and reread them, carefully compare their points of agreement and in what way they agree, then there must be found the truth. Compare also their points and degrees of divergence, would also lead to further discoveries. Suspect if they seem to speak with great clarity and candor, and meditate on the unclear points. So little by little the truth would be delimited, as the watermark when the paper is held up to the light. Any individual who feels genuine interest in Alchemy must have the necessary patience to submit to this test, which in fact is already an initiation."*¹⁶

Who probably worked in the laboratory of Kutna Hora, had been among others *Lazarus Ercker von Schreckenfels*, specialist in mining and metallurgical expert, (the silver mines in the area were still active even in the middle of the sixteenth century) and *Jaroš Griemiller of Třebeska*, that illustrated the figures and translated into Czech the anonymous alchemical treatise, *"Rosarium Philosophorum"*.

The *Sankturinovsky* house with its chapel, laboratories, and also their place of study, fully reflects the maximum of the characters of "Mutus Liber": *"Pray, read, read, read, reread, work and will find"*.



¹⁶ STANISLAS KLOSSOWSKI de ROLA – *"The Golden Game" - "Introduction to Golden Game" - Year 1988*

Budyne in Ohre river bank, Budyně nad Ohří - In the region of Ústí nad Labem



The village of Budyně nad Ohří is about 40 km northwest of Prague. Budyne Castle, formerly surrounded by a water moat, where was a crocodile brought from Egypt, was built in the thirteenth century in the Gothic style, rebuilt in the Renaissance style in the sixteenth,



and then in the romantic style at the beginning of the twentieth century. The building has been preserved in good condition and happens to be one of the most representative place in terms of "archaeological remains" found in alchemical discipline.

Jan Zbynek Zajíc from Hazmburk, (Jan Zbyněk Zajíc z Hazmburka), Castle's owner and imperial counselor, was also an alchemist and had a vast library on the subject. In his Castle stayed personalities like the danish astronomer *Tycho Brahe* and the polish historian Bartolomeo Paprocky. Also have lived and worked there alchemists, including *Bavor Rodovský from Hustiřan the young (Bavor Radovsky mladší z Hustiřan)*, who translated into Czech "*The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*" (*Smaragdova deska*). His literary work is indeed the most recognized and appreciated, yet none of his books of alchemy, "*On the Perfect Art Chemical*" or "*Czech Alchemy*" has had public knowledge and they did not became to be edited. Only some fragments of them are known.

Bavor Radovsky in one of his books, "Philosophical Discourses" (*Řeči filosofské*) of the year 1572, expressed himself as follows: "*White and Red is our color, the name given to us is Mercury. Who in the mud is seeking for the philosophical secrets, he sadly wastes costs, time and labor. In the mercury is everything that the wise men seek, because on it they have the color, the body, the spirit and the soul. Therefore, man must only take mercury ore and while working with it, to achieve the meaning.*"¹⁷ In Czech: "*Bílá a červená jest barva naše, jméno jest nám dáno merkuryáše/rtuti/.mKdo v blátě hledá filozofských tajiností, ten tratí náklad, čas i práci s žalostí. V merkuriáši jest vše, čeho mudrci hledají, neb z něho tělo, ducha i duši barvu mají, toliko rudní merkuryáš má se k tomu vzíti, jeho první tvářnost opanovati a smyslem dojiti*"

Just entering the outer courtyard, the first thing that strikes us, high on a corner of the castle, is a metal figure set on a stone molding, a statue of a gnome. His head is covered with the Phrygian cap, his hands resting on the handle of his huge hammer, whose mass is supported on top of a cubical stone. "*The gnomes, underground genies keepers of mineral treasures, who watch endlessly in the mines of gold and silver and precious stones deposits, appear as symbolic representations, such as humanized figures of metallic "vital spirit" and of material activity.*"¹⁸



¹⁷ A translation of Toni Antonucci, from Czech into Spanish.

¹⁸ FULCANELLI: "*The Dwellings of the Philosophers*" - Cap: "*The Sundial Edinburgh Holyrood Palace.*"

The gnome or dwarf is called "*Kvasnička*", meaning "small fermenter", originally he was located in the front entrance of the main wing of the castle, armed with a sword, that corroded by rust, was replaced by the hammer. *"To alchemists fermentation meant an increase in activity (reaction capacity) of a substance, particularly its ability to enter and also modify other body. That would be a "catalytic" action of the ferment, that is, a small amount of it was able to modify a large amount of substrate."*¹⁹ This metal gnome's figure is associated with the famous stone statue of the "Alchemist", located on the turning of the northern tower of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, which also has his head covered with the Phrygian cap.

The alchemical laboratory from *Budyne*, which also has its own lion guardian (*strážce alchymistické dílny*), is located on the right wing of the castle, after touring throughout the museum and walking down wooden steps, being built above the former stone ones. This space consists of two large chambers solid



walls, one beside the other. The first one is the more generously sized with high, vaulted ceilings. High above, a vertically and gated window, provides the necessary ventilation to the whole room. In the central place, is installed a circular stone oven, also called Athanor, on which is placed a glass retort or *philosophical egg*, inside it the *raw material* was being processed, due to an intense religious attitude by the operator and to the constant heat of fire, which was regulated in four



degrees of intensity. *"First, man gives a higher heat than the boiling point of water. Second man raises the heat between the boiling point of water and the melting point of sulfur. Third, man continues to raise the fire, but below the melting point of tin and fourthly, the fire is maintained exactly in the melting point of lead."*²⁰ A second larger oven as above, with its enormous bellows, is surrounded by tools, pliers, hammers and metal ladles, crucibles, copper pots, scales and some iron ore. They are signs that there people have been working with high temperatures, that is metal smelters, which could be corroborated by several graphite crucibles of different sizes and three pouring spouts, which are displayed in the Castle museum's showcases.



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On one side, on a table, highlights an essential tool in any laboratory, the mortar and pestle for mixing the substances. There are also different kinds of mollusks. *"The calcined lime or quicklime was obtained burning molluscs or calcareous stone and when mixed with water, calcined lime is created releasing a lot of heat. From this*



¹⁹ LAWRYNCEM PRINCIPE: "Alchemy, Encyclopedia of Hermetic Science" - Year 1998

²⁰ JACQUELINE DAUXOIS: "Der Alchemist von Prag, Rudolf II von Habsburg, eine Biographie" - Year 1997.

came the idea, in Alchemy, that this lime stored in it, in the form of inner fire, the warmth with which had kept itself during calcination ... ²¹

By going down a few steps, there is the second chamber, somewhat smaller than the previous one, which was basically used for storage, drying and preparation of medicinal plants. It is clear that the activity in the Budyne Castle's laboratory covered a rather broad spectrum of the Nature, as they have been working with vegetable, mineral and metal raw materials.

Český Krumlov: At the end of our journey through the regions of Bohemia and Ústí nad Labem, we have to mention the city of *Cesky Krumlov*, formerly also called "*the Mecca of the alchemists*" and highlight the figure of *Wilhelm or Vilem of Rozemberg, Vilém z Rožmberka*, viceroy of Bohemia, and great protector and patron of alchemists, such as *Anton Michael from Ebersbach, Antonin Michael z Ebbersbachu*, manager of mines and *Jakub Krčín Jelčany, Jakub Krčín z Jelčan a Sedlčan*, architect, engineer expert in canals and dams and estate manager, both important alchemists, they were at the service of *Count Wilhelm of Rozemberg*.

Jakub Krčín de Jelčan settled the last twenty years of his life in the town of *Křepenice* where he was concentrated with great passion to alchemy. The existing laboratories in *Český Krumlov* and in *Třeboň*, served him as models, giving him a great deal of knowledge to his practice. His tomb, still in the public eye, is a rectangular copper plaque embedded in one of the inner walls of the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary from the old village of *Obdenice „Kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie, Obděnice“*. The heraldic figures embossed on the metal tombstone are framed in a mandorla and consist of two helmets decorated with quite different plumages at its upper side. Both helmets are on a French shield or blazon divided into four quarters containing figures of birds and fishes. The same *Jakub Krčín* drafted the text of the plaque, that is his own epitaph, in which highlights the lack of the date of death: the year 1604. Here is his text: On the perimeter: "*In the year of our Lord ... died a brave and noble man, the knight Jakub Krčín de Jelčan y Sedlčan, in Sedlčan city, in the new palace of Krčín and castle from lord Obděnického. His soul rejoices in heaven, his body rests in peace until the day of resurrection, amen.*" In the center of the coat of arms: "*Friend, do not envy your brother, he rests free, safe, at last he alreduy belongs to eternity. He does not lose his light, but became more confident and bright. Do not bother him passion or greed, or the preoccupation with wealth, fear of poverty or falsehood of what he hears, but he enjoys the good nature, supreme joy, peace and beatitude. Therefore, mourn for who is happy, would be envy, and mourn those who are gone, it would be crazy.*"²² In Czech: Po obvodu: "*Léta Páně ... zemřel statečný a urozený muž, rytíř Jakub Krčín z Jelčan a Sedlčan, města Sedlčan, nového zámku Krčínského a hradu Obděnického pán. Duše jeho raduje se v nebi, tělo odpočívá ve svatém pokoji ke dni*



²¹ CLAUS PRIESNER: "*Alchemy: Encyclopedia of Hermetic Science*" - Year 1998

²² Spanish translation from Czech by Toni Antonucci.

vzkříšení amen." Uprostřed nad erbem: "Příteli, bratru svému nezávidiž, odpočívá svoboden, bezpečen, již konečně věčnosti náležeje. Nepozbyl světla, ale bezpečnějšího a přejasného nabyt. Netrápí ho náruživost ani lakomství, ani péče o bohatství, ani strach před chudobou, aniž sluch jeho bičován láním, ale všech přirozeností dobra ve svrchované radosti a pokoji došel a všeliké blaženosti požívá. Proto oplakávati šťastného by bylo závistí, a toho, jehož již není, pošetilostí."

Other personalities who frequented the court of Rudolph II

The most renowned alchemists and/or followers who frequented the court of Rudolph II were *Michael Maier*, personal physician and secretary of *Rudolph II*. Its main alchemical work is "*Atalanta Fugiens*" (Leakage from Atalanta), a composition of 50 epigrams, engravings, music fugues and prose, and *Heinrich Khunrath o Dr. Henricus Khurath*, physician and hermetic philosopher. His most famous Alchemy literary work is "*Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*" (Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom), a book about the mystical aspects of art.

George Baresch, also known as *Barschius*, an alchemist who worked in the court of Rudolph II in Prague, was of considerable importance in the development of alchemy, medicine, botany, astrology, astronomy, etc. On the death of *Jacobus Sinapius* (1622), responsible for the library of the Emperor, became the sole owner of "Voynich Manuscript", which tried unsuccessfully to translate. *Anselmus Boetius de Boodt* (1550-1632) alchemist and mineralogist, published "*Gemmarum et Lapidum*" one of the best mineralogical Treaty from the XVII century.²³ *Mattioli, Pietro Andrea*: Italian doctor and naturalist. His herbarium is considered the most important natural history of plants from *Dioscorides*. A careful student of botany, he described 100 new plants and coordinated the medical botany of his time in his *Discorsi* ("Commentaries") on the *Materia Medica* of *Dioscorides*, with over 500 engravings. *Martin Ruland the Younger*, german physician, alchemist and astrologer, author of "*Lexicon Alchemiae sive Dictionarium Alchemistarum*".

Praga-Hradčany (Praga's Castle)

The well-known "*Golden Lane or the Alchemists*" is within the Prague Castle, it extends along the wall near the "Deer Moat", is named mostly because the first inhabitants were probably goldsmiths and gold carvers in those little houses rebuilt in the late sixteenth century. Surely have also lived there alchemists who came from other countries, but we find it difficult to accept that a "public", easily accessible place, also even at that time, had been considered the most appropriate to install hidden laboratories.

²³ WILSON WENDELL: "*The History of Mineral Collecting*" 1530-1799. -

Our tracking eventually led us to a rather long and winding passageway in the northwest of Prague Castle, which was formerly outside the walls and bearing the suggestive name of New World ; *Nový Svět*. This remote spot seems to be today as "out of time". In the first of its houses, having the number one, called the "*Golden Griffin*" a metal plate on the front wall testifies that *Tycho Brahe* lived there, which years ago had built his own alchemical laboratory in *Uraniborg* on the island of *Hven*, "... the Alchemy was in the court of Rudolph II also work of the most famous astronomers of the time. *Tycho Brahe* had his own workshop in alchemy, and in the year 1599 sent from there a medicine against the plague".²⁴



Simply because the greatest mathematician and court astronomer lived there, for the meaningful names that had many of the houses: *The House of the Golden Pear, of the Golden Bush, of the Golden Grape, of the Acorn Golden, of the Golden Star, of the Golden Plough, of the Golden Sun, of the Golden Lamb*, and for having been and even still is, a silent, hidden and almost "intimate" place, there is no doubt that this is the "authentic" Golden Lane of the Alchemists, that not only housed but also offered the most appropriate place to mount laboratories that should remain hidden from prying eyes and disruptive of everyday life.

Nerudova Street - *Nerudova ulice*



In many of the facades of the houses on the street Nerudovan (*Nerudova ulice*), there are a large number of symbols, figures and images, both pictorial and reliefs that are considered with great admiration as creative expressions of artistic endeavor. However, some of those figures also involve an intentional alchemical content, such as the figure of the golden Medusa with snakes coiled around her head instead of hair, and especially the enigmatic red lamb, *červeného beránka*.

Allegorical expressions are in alchemy specially significant, since they lead to understandings in an intuitive way, through a non-rational route. And here we refer specifically to the allegorical image of the lamb or ram (Aries) seen in both senses, as substance and as a moment of process. *Limojon de Saint Didier* wrote about that in the dialogue between *Eudoxius* and *Pirófilo*: "*Eudoxius: ... but to point more accurately this season, says (the Cosmopolitan) that there were lambs and bulls graze in the fields, accompanied by two young shepherds clearly expressing with this spiritual allegory the*



²⁴ SLAVICA KROČA: "Alchemists in the Court of Rudolph II" – "*Alchymisté na dvoře Rudolfa II*" - Año 2008

three months of Spring, with the three accompanying celestial signs: Aries, Taurus and Gemini." *"Pirófilo: ... I'm convinced of the high value of such clarification, able to see clearly in other most important obscurities: indeed, few people imagine that the Violets and Hyacinths from d'Espagnet and the animals with horns from the Hesperides garden, the belly and the house of the ram of the Cosmopolitan and of Philaethes, the island of the goddess Venus, the two shepherds and everything else you have just explained me, signify Spring season"*²⁵

Kirchberg am Wagram – In Lower Austria – In Niederösterreich



When we mentioned the alchemical activity deployed near the Kingdom of Bohemia's borders, in Czech *České království* and in German *Königreich Böhmen*, we refer also to the town of *Kirchberg am Wagram*, located in the north of Vienna, in the heart of lower Austria, known for being one of the pilgrimage "Route to Santiago through the winegrowing regions", procession which starts from *Mikulov* in the Czech Republic and ends in *Mautern* in Austria, on the banks of the river Danube. Hidden under the floor of the "sacristy", a room next to the *Oberstockstall* Castle's chapel, near *Kirchberg am Wagram*, was found in the year 1980 a mid-sixteenth century metallurgical-alchemical laboratory. *"He was playing the "treasure hunt" and suddenly he discovered that in the castle's old sacristy some cobble stones went down the floor's level. When looking under them, he found "only" broken pieces of a ceramic pot and glass pieces. Fritz Solomon at the age of ten years old, had found the first hints of the "alchemical treasure" on the property of Oberstockstall"*.²⁶ This room, where "the hole" was found, plus a second one located directly above that, accessible by a bulwark ladder are a unity conceived as a laboratory, which according to the analysis of the growth rings of the wood frame from upstairs door, is dating from 1549. *"For the chronological framework, the excavations of 1980 and 1993 provided the following benchmarks, relevant for the dating of the laboratory: A mold for butter with the date 1549 inscribed in mirror writing. Two pennies, one of Lower Austria at the time of Rudolph II (Raitpfennig) and the other of Carinthia from 1595 (Kärntner Pfennig). A piece of round glass, curved and leaded for the decoration of windows (Butzenscheibe), in which "Paulus Schnur, an officer Glazier from Vienna 1577", was immortalized along with his assistants."*²⁷



²⁵ LIMOJON DE SAINT DIDIER: *"The Hermetic Triumph or the Victorious Philosopher's Stone" - "Talk of Eudoxlus and Pirófilo about the Former War of the Knights". - Year 1699*

²⁶ SIGRID VON OSTEN: *"Das Alchemistenlaboratorium von Oberstockstall – ein Fundkomplex des 16. Jahrhunderts aus Niederösterreich"*

²⁷ RUDOLF WERNER SOUKUP/HELMUT MAYER: *"Alchemistisches Gold. Paracelsistische Pharmaka"*-Year1997

According to these historical dates, those who were connected to the laboratory were pastors and chaplains of the Diocese of Kirchberg: *Cristoph Trenpeck zu Trenbach* (rebuilder of Renaissance style castle) *Urban Trenpeck zu Trenbach*, the Count *Victor August Fugger*, his brother *Sigmund Friedrich Fugger* and the nephew of both *Johann Jakob von Lamberg*, not necessarily all aligned about this subject with their ecclesiastical superiors, the Bishop of Passau, since there were contacts with *Wilhelm von Rosenberg*, (*Vilém z Rožmberka*) in Bohemia. As *von Lamberg*, it is a fact that he traveled to the end of April 1591 to Prague, where he was meeting with *Rudolph II*.

The metallurgical laboratory in Oberstockstall and the Museum of Kirchberg am Wagram

The lower room of the laboratory in *Oberstockstall*, of solid walls and compact vaults, was 3.30 meters below the current ground level, its greater distance between columns was of 2.20 meters, and the entrance approximately 0.80 to 1.20 mts., where there had been installed at least



two large ovens and was equipped with the most "high technology", prepared for alloys research, minerals experimentation and optimization of metallurgical cupellation, extraction, cementation, and metals smelting. The findings inside the



laboratory, are made up of nearly one thousand original pieces of that time, some complete, many restored, mainly ceramics, glass and metal, exhibited at the Museum of *Kirchberg am Wagram*, in the Old Town Hall, under the supervision of the researcher *Dr. Sigrid von Osten*: *"The village of Oberzell, was the most important ceramic center of the bishopric of Passau, founded in 1424. Furthermore Hafnerzell, as it was called before the village, was especially famous for its crucibles, which were exported worldwide, most likely already in the sixteenth century. This is confirmed by the discovery of an experimental laboratory in 1585 on the island of Roanoke, North Carolina, USA. Naturally, also Oberstockstall was supplied from Hafnerzell, as the Pastor Urban von Trenbach gave the order to mark for his research laboratory in Kirchberg, "seven miles above Vienna", some pots with the letter T."*²⁸

In the museum can be seen distillation stills, aludels, retorts, flasks, cups, color bottles, large ceramic pots, muffles, a porcelain cup possibly



used for the transfer of mercury, and more than 300 crucibles of all sizes. There is no doubt that the main work consisted of metal casting, confirmed by the huge number of crucibles found, in which there were residues of lead, copper and silver. *"During excavations in Oberstockstall in 1980, were found,*



²⁸ SIGRID VON OSTEN: *"Tiegel – Töpfe - Tabaksmühlen. Keramik aus Oberzell"*

among other things, a few pieces of minerals: pyrite ($Fe S_2$), arsenopyrite ($Fe As S$), chalcopyrite ($Cu Fe S_2$), antimonite ($Sb_2 S_3$), tetrahedrite ($Cu_{12} Sb_4 S_{13}$), galena (Lead S), and a complex silver ore consisting of silver (Ag), cerargyrite (Ag Cl) and pyrite ($Fe S_2$). From the 77 objects taken from the excavation and recognized as minerals, ores and rocks, only 19 metallic minerals could be identified. The amount of these in relation to the total of pieces from laboratory that had been found, is remarkably small. One reason may be that the metallic ores have been stored elsewhere or discarded."²⁹

It is evident, that for the dismantling and final closing of the Oberstockstall laboratory, possibly occurred not longer after Rudolph II's death, they would have enough time to dismantle the large ovens and take them together with the mortars and distillers glass and especially the "full production" of its metallurgical and alchemical works. However, the "archaeological remains" being found hundreds of years later, provided sufficient information to make a good historical reconstruction of the period of metallurgical-alchemical activity in lower Austria.



Some considerations

Our study has focused specifically on alchemical activity that was taking place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throughout the Kingdom of Bohemia to its borders and even beyond, having the most varied expressions and forms, which had been confirmed by the different "archaeological alchemical remains" found along our field study. *"The basis for the successful in alchemical work was in the patience to repeat his experiments. When the expected result was not coming, the alchemist continued repeating his experiments in hope that the results comes in case the constellation of the stars is favorable, as well as series of circumstances even not known to him... Good knowledge of astrology was essential condition of alchemist's work as well."*³⁰



It is therefore clear that not all alchemists had the same wisdom, so we can understand the huge "diversity" of interests that led them to choose the places, the own procedures, objectives and the more appropriate materials.

One of those alchemical expressions, which had and still has the greatest impact, is that concerning the production of gold, the metallic transmutation, considered by those who generate this process as a "philosophical issue".

On the other hand, not everyone agreed to keep it hidden. In year 1604, at the court in Prague and in the presence of Emperor Rudolph II, the alchemist Michael Sendivogius transformed a silver coin in pure gold. The emperor impressed, placed in the same room of the castle, a commemorative marble plaque with the following inscription: «*Faciat hoc*

²⁹ RUDOLF WERNER SOUKUP/HELMUT MAYER – "Alchemistisches Gold. Paracelsistische Pharmaka"- Year 1997

³⁰ PHILIPP ULSTAD - Sol et Luna - "Coleum Philosophorum" - Strassburg - Year 1536

quispiam alius quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus», "Let another do what Sendivogius Polish was able to do". This plate was still preserved in the Castle in the year 1961.

The adept *Labujardière* left a box containing a red powder as a legacy to his friend *Johann Conrad Richthausen*, with which he presented himself to the Emperor Ferdinand III of Bohemia (1608-1657), claiming to be in possession of the philosopher's stone. The Emperor allowed, under certain conditions, to perform the experiment. *"On January 15, 1649, was held this "divine metamorphosis" in the Castle (of Prague). The adept Richthausen, in the presence of the Emperor Ferdinand III and the Mayor, Count Russtatt (Count of Rutz, director of mines) would have ennobled with a grain of dye (red powder), 18 thousands grains of mercury in gold, with which the emperor had minted some 300 ducats coins as a souvenir."*³¹

Despite the irony of *Josef Svátek*, certainly cannot have been easy for him and other historians, to recognize and accept such transmutations historically considered as undeniable, as they have been carried out within the very Imperial Courts and was being testified by so important people. *"The emperor Leopold I (1640-1705), in the presence of his royal physician Dr. Johann Zwölfer, pulled out from a box he kept hidden, one of those gold medals, showed it to him and allowed him to mint it of copper, so in his "Mantissa Pharmospagyrica" can be seen a reproduction of it. In the front, there is a naked youth with a bright sun overhead. In the right hand he holds the lyre of Apollo, on the left the caduceus of Mercury. The Latin inscription says: "A divine transformation was performed in Prague on January 15, 1649 in the presence of his Holy Majesty". On the back, in the same language says: "As few people know this art, is very rare that it comes to light. God be blessed for all eternity, as occasionally reveals his miserable creatures a part of his immense wisdom."*³²

In recent years, attention is drawn to the huge proliferation of books, writings, conferences and websites on Alchemy, even in many cases they have "new" viewpoints, that is, more positive treatment of the subject in relation to the past, giving perhaps the historically "challenged" discipline, a more rehabilitative concept. We are perhaps, faced with a new resurgence of Alchemy, as the official science still cannot find answers to make internal changes in the human being in a more evolutionary sense, and while there is such a need for "profound change", the Alchemy will continue waking the imagination of many persons to get "back to work".

This is in our opinion, one of the most insightful descriptions about alchemy: *"From our view, traditional alchemy produces important changes in the mental structure of the operator. Certainly, it is not enough to perform operations with substances but it is necessary for the operator "resonate" with the substance. Empirically, the Alchemy has*

³¹ JOSEF SVÁTEK: "Kulturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen – Die Alchemie in Böhmen" - Year 1879

³² JOSEF SVÁTEK: "Kulturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen – Die Alchemie in Böhmen" - Year 1879

given allegorical elements to enter the "sacred places" and produce psychophysical energy conversions. This is the direction of a process in which the operator is following steps of which he must obtain internal precise registers, "indicators". The whole process is aimed at "destabilizing the vibratory field of the operator", operating with the raw material. The reality is that operating externally, there are changes in the "internal substances". Alchemy is, in its own right, a path of mystical Ascesis".³³

The Lady on the main door of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris is a classic of medieval alchemists and also contemporaries. She held a scepter in one hand and two books, one open and one closed in the other, on her chest has supported a staircase, is an Ascesis because it speaks of steps of Ascent.



³³ SILO: "Alchemy Materials" – Mendoza, Argentina – Year 2000

Conclusions

Alchemy could have so important development in Prague and Bohemia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Czech and Slovak: *Čechy*) due to a special circumstance. It is necessary to understand that this region was part of the "Holy Roman Empire". This Empire was a unique institution in world history: it was only the integration of nations joined in a single sacred concept of Renaissance Nations with Christian-Roman Catholic bases with one common purpose. From its beginning, the Holy Roman Empire was constituted by diverse People and at the peak it included most of the current Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Czech Republic and Slovenia, as well as eastern France, northern Italy and western Poland. And with them their languages, covering a multitude of dialects and variants from which later were formed German, Italian and French and also the Slavic languages. It was divided into numerous territories ruled by secular princes and priests or bishops, earls, imperial knights and cities. Unlike the confederations, the concept of Empire not only involved the government of a specific territory, but had strong religious connotations (hence the *holy* prefix).

However, the conditionings of a higher plane can be partly overturned by the action of a person with enough breadth of influence.

The formative landscape of Emperor Rudolph II, son of a Protestant father (the Emperor Maximilian) who had to pretend to be Catholic, and a Catholic mother, Spanish Infanta, forced him to receive an education according to his rank of heir to the throne, and allowed him as a young man to fully understand the glaring contradictions between the doctrines and the actions and religious clashes. His sensitive spirit allowed him to connect with the sages of the Imperial Court who showed him a different way to discover for himself the mysteries of nature and life. To do this, at a particular time, chose the city of Prague, a realm that exuded mystery, magic and mysticism, which he considered as the most appropriate for his spiritual development.

As regards to the alchemists, her greatest legacy of that time in Bohemia was the investigation of the hidden properties of matter together with nature, the influence and character of spiritual beings, their communication's way with mortals and the ways in which it would be possible to get their help. All this was the objective of Occult Philosophy, which had a huge development.

Ora et labora

An important point to highlight is the meaning of the "prayer" or "pray" for alchemists. The "ora et labora" was connected to the internal and external of the Magna and Sacred Work, *the Magna Opus*, since in the mystique of this work of transformation that is the Alchemy, the prayer occupied an important place, as important as laboratory work.

The meaning of prayer for alchemists who were on a search for transformation, was to achieve a connection with the depths of themselves, was a direction towards the sacred. And if for the Church of the time, the direction was towards the Divine, where the "god" was external, for alchemists however, the "god" was internal.

In our archaeological trace work we found that oratories were special places, with morphological and allegorical meaning, the majority located near the laboratory, some were in the upper part of the building and the laboratories in basements or underground places, in others, the oratory was the anteroom of the laboratory and in others, the oratory occupied one corner or special space within the same laboratory.

The fact that most of the laboratories include oratories, tell us of a deep and essential faith to achieve so vast and significant knowledge in all branches of science and Hermetic arts. That's why today is attributed to the alchemists to be the forerunners of modern atomic and nuclear physics. They also have investigated about the life-giving power and to prepare the soul for transcendence. Some examples that have been corroborated in the current modern laboratories have been the transmutation of elements and the consideration of the astral and the operator's mood influences in chemical processes.

One of the key lessons we have learned during this study, valid for the development, expansion and deepening of this discipline, is that it is essential to obtain a deep faith that the simultaneous personal and material transmutation is possible.

This deep and unwavering faith is gradually being achieved with the intimate personal practice of prayer and the confirmation by working with the materials.

The mental direction of the prayer, is related to the intention to reach the good knowledge, or that is to decipher the sacred in the depth of consciousness.

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